



BENIGNA MACHIAVELLI Winnifred Assmann

In between "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) and *Herland* (1915), feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935) wrote and published this delightful fictional autobiography, *Benigna Machiavelli* (1914), in her monthly magazine, *The Forerunner*.

The narrator, young Benigna MacAvelly, decides as a child that she intends to emulate her ancestor Niccolò Machiavelli but dedicate her machinations to doing good rather than evil. She starts her ingenious plotting very early in life (for example, as an 11-year-old, she enlists her classmates in an elaborate money-raising scheme to buy a new watch for an impoverished teacher), and moves on to larger goals as she gets older. Her most significant challenge is her domineering father. Determined to liberate her downtrodden mother from his verbal abuse, Benigna concocts an elaborate plan to deal with him and restore her mother's self-confidence. (Summary by Winnifred Assmann)

Read by Winnifred Assmann. Total running time: 5:48:42

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